



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

SNAKE RIVER FISH AND WILDLIFE OFFICE  
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# PROPOSED SOUTHERN IDAHO GROUND SQUIRREL CANDIDATE CONSERVATION AGREEMENT AND DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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- QUESTION

*What is a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances?*

- ANSWER

A Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances is a voluntary agreement under the Endangered Species Act between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and non-Federal landowners. It addresses conservation needs of proposed or candidate species, or species likely to become candidates for federal protection. Individual landowners interested in conserving these species who have suitable habitat on their property and are willing to participate in certain conservation measures may enroll in the Agreement. Participants agree to implement conservation practices on their lands that will remove or reduce threats to the species. In return, the Service assures landowners that additional regulatory restrictions will not be placed on their land management practices in the future should the species be placed under federal protection. Land management practices may include farming and ranching related activities, crop cultivation and harvesting, livestock grazing and production, farm equipment operation, and recreational activities. A permit authorizing incidental take of a species is issued to each participating landowner enrolled under the Agreement.

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- QUESTION

*What is a "Programmatic" Candidate Conservation Agreement?*

- ANSWER

A programmatic Candidate Conservation Agreement is a broad agreement, typically encompassing a larger area than an individual Agreement. Programmatic agreements are developed when there are a large number of landowners engaging in similar land uses who wish to participate in the Agreement. Environmental compliance (ie; NEPA and ESA) is secured for all landowners collectively rather than requiring each participant to comply individually.

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- QUESTION

*How would the proposed Southern Idaho Ground Squirrel Candidate Conservation Agreement work?*

- ANSWER

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (Department) has applied to the Service for an enhancement of survival permit (also known as an "incidental take" permit) under Section 10 of the ESA. The permit application includes the proposed Programmatic Southern Idaho Ground Squirrel Candidate Conservation Agreement between the Service, the Department, and the Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation. The permit authorizing incidental take of southern Idaho ground squirrels would be issued to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. The proposed term of the Agreement is 20 years.

The primary goal of the Agreement is to implement habitat and population conservation measures for the squirrel on non-Federal lands. Habitat conservation measures will focus on restoration or protection of native plant communities, as well as other habitat management measures to benefit the squirrels. If appropriate, reintroducing or moving ground squirrels to suitable, unoccupied habitat may also be considered.

- QUESTION

*What lands are included in the proposed Agreement?*

- ANSWER

Under this Agreement, the parties would implement conservation measures for the southern Idaho ground squirrel over approximately 1,046,569 acres in Adams, Gem, Payette and Washington Counties.

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- QUESTION

*What is the draft Environmental Assessment?*

- ANSWER

To comply with NEPA, the Service has prepared a draft Environmental Assessment in conjunction with the Agreement. The purpose of the EA is to evaluate the proposal, present several alternatives for implementation of the proposal, and facilitate public comments. Proposed alternatives for implementation of the Agreement and analysis of each appear in the draft document. The EA is published under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances Final Policy" (64 FR 32726).

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- QUESTION

*Why was this Agreement proposed?*

- ANSWER

The need for this type of an agreement stems from the fact that the entire range of the species occurs in an area largely comprised of private land. Current information indicates that the species has been declining throughout its range since 1985. Conservation measures implemented on private lands are important for the long-term survival of the southern Idaho ground squirrel. Eighty-five percent of squirrel's current habitat is on private property, and the Agreement addresses those lands.

The conservation measures under the Agreement are intended to reduce all threats to the southern Idaho ground squirrel that are controllable by participating landowners within the project area. By reducing all threats on enrolled, private lands, this Agreement meets the standard for Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances. That is, the benefits of conservation measures implemented by property owners under this Agreement, when combined with the benefits that would be achieved if these actions were implemented on other areas, would preclude or remove the need to protect southern Idaho ground squirrels under the ESA.

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- QUESTION

*Am I eligible to participate in the Agreement?*

- ANSWER

Any landowner interested in conserving southern Idaho ground squirrels who has suitable habitat on their property and willing to participate in certain conservation measures may enroll in the Agreement. A site-specific plan tailored to land management on the landowner's property will be developed.

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- QUESTION

*How do I comment on this proposed Agreement and Draft Environmental Assessment?*

- ANSWER

Comments on both the proposed Programmatic Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances and the draft Environmental Assessment may be submitted in writing to: Carmen Thomas, Project Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709. Comments may also be faxed to 208-378-5262, or e-mailed to [fw1srbocomment@fws.gov](mailto:fw1srbocomment@fws.gov). Please include "SIGS CCAA Comments" in the title line for faxes and e-mails. Please submit electronic comments in an ASCII file format, and avoid the use of special characters and encryption. The documents may also be viewed online at <http://idahoes.fws.gov>. If our Internet connection is disrupted, please submit your comments by mail or fax, and obtain hard copies of the documents from the contact office above. Comments must be received by June 7, 2004.